

## Message Text

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42

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
----- 077033

R 040445Z MAY 76  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4289  
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1189

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS : MASS, TC  
SUBJECT : HELICOPTER SALES TO ABU DHABI

FOR DEP ASST SECY SOBER FROM AMBASSADOR

REF: STATE 105042

1. INTERIM GUIDANCE PROVIDED REFTEL IS HELPFUL. PARTICULARLY HAVING GONE OVER GENERAL GROUND OF ARMS SALES IN GULF WITH YOU ON MY RECENT VISIT TO DEPT, AND HAVING JUST RECEIVED BRIEFING ON NEW SECURITY ASSISTANCE BILL FROM STEVEN HUFFMAN, I UNDERSTAND PROBLEMS INVOLVED. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE SEVERAL CONSIDERATIONS THAT SHOULD NOT BE LOST SIGHT OF IN CONNECTION WITH POSSIBLE ABU DHABI SALE.

2. ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE UNWARRANTED CONCLUSION, REFTEL SUGGESTS THAT CONSIDERATION OF SALES TO ABU DHABI AND BAHRAIN WILL BE CONSIDERED AS ONE PACKAGE PROBLEM. THIS WOULD APPEAR TO US TO BE UNJUSTIFIED IN LIGHT OF FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT NATURE OF EQUIPMENT EACH COUNTRY IS LOOKING AT, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT FROM BRIEFINGS SIKORSKY REPS HAVE GIVEN US. HELICOPTER ADDF IS CONSIDERING, WE UNDERSTAND, IS BIG JOB DESIGNED FOR HEAVY CARGO AND TROOP TRANSPORT. IT IS NOT DESIGNED TO HAVE GUNDS MOUNTED ON IT. FROM CONVERSATIONS WE HAVE HAD WITH SHAIKH SULTAN BIN ZAYED, DEPUTY VSC-IN-C OF ADDF, IT IS CLEAR HE SEES PURPOSE OF HELICOPTERS IN EXACTLY SAME LIGHT AS C-130'S WHICH USG HAS

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PREVIOUSLY LICENSED FOR SALE TO ABU DHABI. WE BELIEVE THIS IS

NOT ONLY A LEGITIMATE DISTINCTION TO MAKE BUT ONE THAT WOULD BE CONSIDERED VALID IN ANY EXPLANATION OF SALE TO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES. THERE IS FURTHER DISTINCTION TO BE MADE IN THAT, ACCORDING MANAMA 288, BAHRAINIS WANT SALE UNDER FMS AND IN-COUNTRY US MILITARY PERSONNEL TO SUPERVISE CONTRACTORS PERFORMANCE, WHEREAS ADDF IS SEEKING PURELY COMMERCIAL DEAL WITH SIKORSKY.

3. SECOND POINT IS THAT WE MUST RELATE OUR ACTION ON THIS REQUEST TO EXPERIENCE WE RECENTLY HAD HEREMWF ADDF REQUEST FOR TOWS. IN SENDING US INSTRUCTIONS TO TURN DOWN THIS REQUEST (75 STATE 254114), DEPARTMENT SAID, "YOU SHOULD MAKE A MAXIMUM EFFORT TO SEPARATE OUR GENERAL POLICY FROM THE OUTCOME IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE. WE DO WISH TO BE HELPFUL TO ABU DHABI IN MEETING ITS LEGITIMATE DEFENSE NEEDS." IN EXPLAINING OUR DECISION ON TOWS TO REPRESENTATIVES OF UAE OFFICIALS, WE DID PRECISELY THAT. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ASSURANCES OF OUR "WISH TO BE HELPFUL" CAN CARRY ANY CREDIBILITY WHATSOEVER IF WE CANNOT PERMIT SALE OF UNARMED HELICOPTERS TO ADDF. WE NOTE, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT NSDM 186 SPECIFICALLY CITES HELICOPTERS AS AMONG TYPES OF EQUIPMENT "THAT WILL MEET THE AREA'S REAL SECURITY NEEDS". WE ENTIRELY AGREE. THE ADDF HAS NO OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY AGAINST ANY OTHER STATE AND ACQUISITION OF THESE AIRCRAFT CLEARLY WILL NOT GIVE IT ONE. IT DOES HOWEVER HAVE LEGITIMATE NEED TO BE ABLE TO MOVE ITS TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT RAPIDLY TO ANY PLACE WITHIN UAE AS PART OF ITS INTERNAL SECURITY MISSION. THIS, ALONG WITH GENERAL CARGO HAULING (ADDF C-130'S HAVE BEEN RECENTLY OCCUPIED WITH TRANSPORTING 10,000 DATE PALMS FROM TUNISIA TO AL-AIN), IS CLEARLY ROLE ADDF HAS IN MIND FOR HELICOPTERS.

4. PUT PLAINLY AND SIMPLY, ACTION BY USG TO PREVENT THIS SALE, IF SHAIKH SULTAN DECIDES HE WANTS THE SIKORSKYS, WILL HURT US HERE. IT IS CLEAR FROM MY RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM THAT IT HAS NOT CROSSED HIS MIND THAT USG COULD FIND REASON TO DENY SALE OF SUCH EQUIPMENT. HE ALONG WITH UAE OFFICIALS TO WHOM WE HAVE PAINSTAKINGLY EXPLAINED REASONS FOR TURN-DOWN ON TOWS HAS REACTED WITH SOME TOUCHINESS TO OUR DECISION. UNFORTUNATELY AMONG THOSE OFFICIALS, SHAIKH SULTAN IS FAR AND AWAY THE MOST IMPORTANT. HE APPEARS MORE AND MORE AT HIS FATHER'S SIDE AND IN OPINION OF MOST

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OBSERVERS IS BEING GROOMED TO BE FUTURE FULER OF ABU DHABI. WHILE WE THINK HE HAS ABSORBED SOME OF FACTORS THAT MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO SELL TOWS, I FEEL CERTAIN THAT HE WOULD TAKE REFUSAL TO ISSUE LICENSE FOR HELICOPTERS AS HOSTILE GESTURE PURE AND SIMPLE, AND RECEIVE ANY EXPLANATIONS WE PUT FORWARD AS RATIONALIZATION FOR PLAIN DISREGARD FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH UAE. IT IS EQUALLY CERTAIN THAT THESE NEGATIVE VIBRATIONS WOULD BE CONVEYED BY SULTAN TO HIS FATHER, AND I BELIEVE THEY WOULD AFFECT

OTHER AREAS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING,  
FOR EXAMPLE, IF TECHNICAL ABISTANCE PROJECTS WHICH WE HAVE WORKED

HARD TO GET STARTED HERE WERE DROPPED OR CANCELLED. IT WOULD ALSO  
NOT BE SURPRISING IF MAJOR CONTRACTS ON WHICH US FIRMS ARE  
BIDDING HERE COULD UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES BE PUSHED TOWARD  
COMPETING NON-US FIRMS.  
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## Message Attributes

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